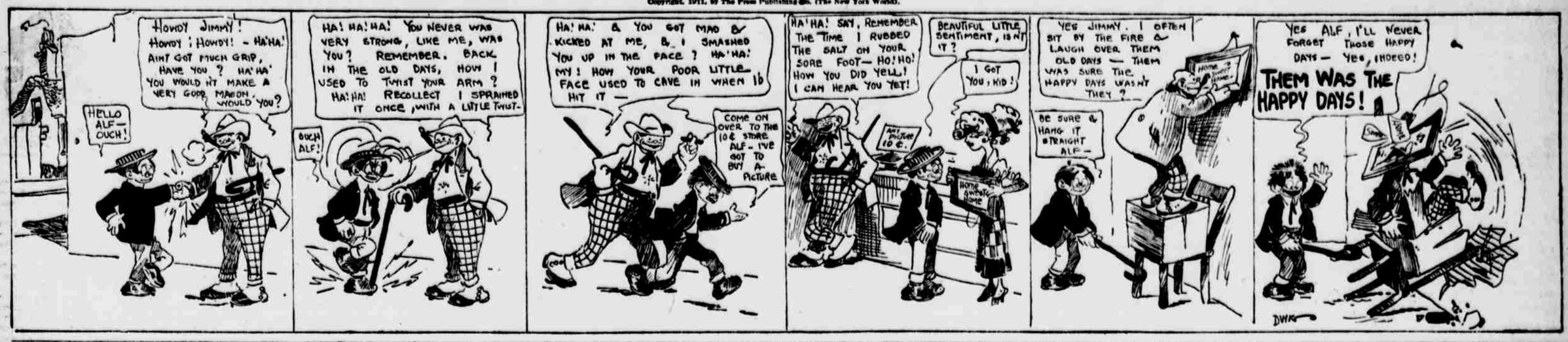
"Them Was the Happy Days!"

By Clare Victor Dwiggins



The Professor's Mystery

By WELLS HASTINGS and BRIAN HOOKER.

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Crosby, a young college professor, falls in love with Margaret Tabor (known to her family as Peggy), about whom a mystery seems to hang. After rejecting his acquaintanceship for no apparent reason, she chose Crosby as her escort on a night motor tour from her Stamford summer home to New York. They go to a tenement-house and there find Margaret's old nurse, Sheila Caruccl, found wounded and senseless. Nearby is her husband in a drunken sleep. They take Sheila back to the Tabor home. Caruccl holds some sort of a threat over the head of Margaret's father. Crosby and a reporter named MacLean go in search of Caruccl, only to find that two detectives are also following him. Crosby tries to solve the mystery that surrounds Margaret, but fails to do so. Caruccl is arrested, but is released at Sheila's plea. Mrs. Tabor disappears, but returns safely. She asks Crosby "Are you in the secret, too?" but will not explain. Mr. Tabor orders Caruccl to leave America. Crosby goes to New York to see the command is obeyed. From MacLean, Crosby learns a rumor that leads him to believe Margaret is married to Dr. Reid, her supposed brother-in-law.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Borderland and a Name.

"IT'S an infernal lie," I said dully.

"Sure it is." Maclean was thoroughly embarrassed and uncomfortable. "The way I work it out is, there's probably just enough in it somewhere for Caruccl to build on. Maybe Reid did get into some mess or other way back before he was married, an' Caruccl works that in with what he thinks he knows about the family now, an' dopes out this scandal in high life business. Or maybe he don't believe it himself, an' just has it in for the old man. You can't tell whether it's muck-rakin' or mudslingin', but it's bound to be partly both, you see? I only told you so you'd know what was around. Well, are you comin'?"

I got my hat mechanically, and went out with him into the dust and the heat. The sense of unreality that had been upon me that early morning in the automobile was returned now in the breathless afternoon.

The hazy silt of sky overhead, the stark light and shadow of the street had the tones of a cheap colored photograph. The very smell of the air was like a memory of itself. The roar and jangle of the traffic seemed to come from a distance through a stillness that listened; and the wail of a hand organ on the corner somehow completed and enhanced it all. I had only had one serious illness in my life, and that had been long ago; but I remembered that upon my first venturing out of doors after it, things had looked so; and I wondered for a moment whether I were going to be ill again. But that was nonsense.

I was not a person to collapse upon the hearing of bad news; and, besides, this news I did not believe. Maclean had not believed it himself in telling it to me. Only he had so much less knowledge than I of its consistency. Grant for once that Lady was Miriam, that she was an only daughter—and they all would have done even as I had seen them doing.

So Lady would have worn her ring, so feared our growing intimacy, so felt the burden of an abnormality not her own, so confessed to me the barrier and in extremity lied about her name, so the family would have shrunk from any notice, and striven to rid themselves of Caruccl and of me. Straight this way pointed every line of mystery since the beginning; here was one logical motive for all.

The explanation fitted every fact; only, I could not believe it of the people. A small cloud covered the sun and the hot street turned suddenly gray. A horse clocked heavily around the corner, the rumble of the wheels behind him suddenly muffled as they struck the asphalt of the avenue.

We were going up the steps of a house, a house closed for the summer with dead-colored board shutters over the lower windows, and an outer door of the same, on which the bright brass disk of a spring lock took the place of a knob. Maclean glanced again up at the number as he pressed the bell.

"Admit one gent and phantoms," he said sniffing. "Now you put your soul in a safe pocket, an' button it in. This gang, they'd snitch it in a second."

A low-voiced man in a cutaway coat opened the door and we stood for a moment in a dark hallway smelling of cloth and furniture, while he and Maclean talked together in a half-whisper. I suppose explaining my presence.

Then he opened another door at the side of the hall and ushered us into the front room, where we half groped our way to a seat on the further side, amid a low rustle of whispers.

A grayish twilight filtered through the bright cracks of the shutters and between the closed folding doors at the rear. At first the contrast with the glare of the street made it seem almost absolutely dark; and as my eyes gradually became adapted to the dimness I remembered being shut in the closet when I was a child, and how the pale streaks from door-casing and keyhole had gradually diluted the gloom in just the same way. The recollection was so vivid that I half imagined here the same rustle and stuffiness of hanging clothes, and the sense of outrage at the shutting out daylight.

Then slowly the room formed itself out of darkness into grayness; the white ceiling, with its moving shadows and bulbous cloth-enfolded chandelier; the floor and furniture, all shrouded in summer covers of grayish denim; and the indefinite shade of the walls, lightened here and there by the square of a picture turned back outward, and darkened by the gloom of the corners and the blurred figures of the dozen people or so who sat about in twos and threes talking in whispers and mutterings.

At the back of the room were large folding doors, now tightly closed. In the corner on the side toward the hall stood a grand piano, enormous and bare under its pale coverings; and the outer wall was broken by a marble chimney-piece of the fifties whereon stood lumps of bric-a-brac tied up in bags.

Most of the furniture was ranged rigidly against the wall; but in the centre of the floor glimmered dully the uncovered mahogany of a heavy round table. In spite of the dark and the coolness, the air was close and stuffy, as if with the presence of a multitude; and I was a trifle surprised to find that we were actually so few.

"What sort of a crowd is this?" I asked Maclean in an undertone. "I can't make them out."

"Every sort. I mean every sort that's got the social drag or the prominence in this business to get in with the crowd. But inside of that, you get 'em all kinds, you see? The chap that lets us in is a philosophy prof. an' a psychic researcher—Shelburgh, his name is. That old gink over there alone by himself is some other pioneer o' modern thought. I've got to find out about him later. The rest are mostly social lights, I guess. This is the Emmet Langdons' house, an' they're here somewhere. I can't see faces yet, can you?"

I shook my head. "We seem to be in Sunday edition company, anyway."

"Sure. All headliners. Faces on file in every office. Hullo, here's the spook-stress. They're off in a bunch!"

A rather heavy woman in a long drab dust-coat had come in, followed by Prof. Shelburgh, who closed the door behind them. I gathered a vague impression, only half visual, that she was middle-aged and of that plumply blond type which ages by imperceptible degrees.

She made me think, somehow, of a mass of molasses candy after it has been pulled into paleness and before it has hardened, but I could not tell whether this suggestion came from her voice or from her sleepily effusive manner or was a mere fancy about a physical presence which I could hardly see.

She took off her hat and coat and sat down at the centre-table, pushing back her hair and rubbing her hands over her face as if to shake off drowsiness, while the others, except Maclean and myself and the gentleman in the corner, drew up their seats in a circle about the table and placed their hands upon it.

The professor counted the hands aloud in a perfunctory tone, and they all leaned forward, hand touching hand around the circle.

"Are we all right, Mrs. Mahl?" the professor asked.

"All right—all right"— cooed the medium; "conditions are good to-day—I can feel 'em comin' already—sing to me, somebody."

The old gentleman in the corner made a dull sound that might have been a snort or a suppressed cough. One of the women began to sing "Suwanee River" just above her breath, and the others joined in, half-humming, half-crooning.

It was like the singing of children in its toneless unison, in its dragged rhythms and slurring from note to note; and the absurd resemblance of the scene to a game of Jenkins-Up gave the final touch of incongruity. These people, or some of them at least, awaited the very presence of the dead; all were in quest of the supernatural or the unknown.

Here were the dimness, the fragile tension, the impalpable weight of mutuality, the atmosphere of a coming crisis, and this in the commonplace room, closed up for the summer, with the traffic of the avenue outside and the commonplace people within, incongruous in their ordinary clothes, sitting with their hands upon a table and humming a hackneyed melody a little off the key.

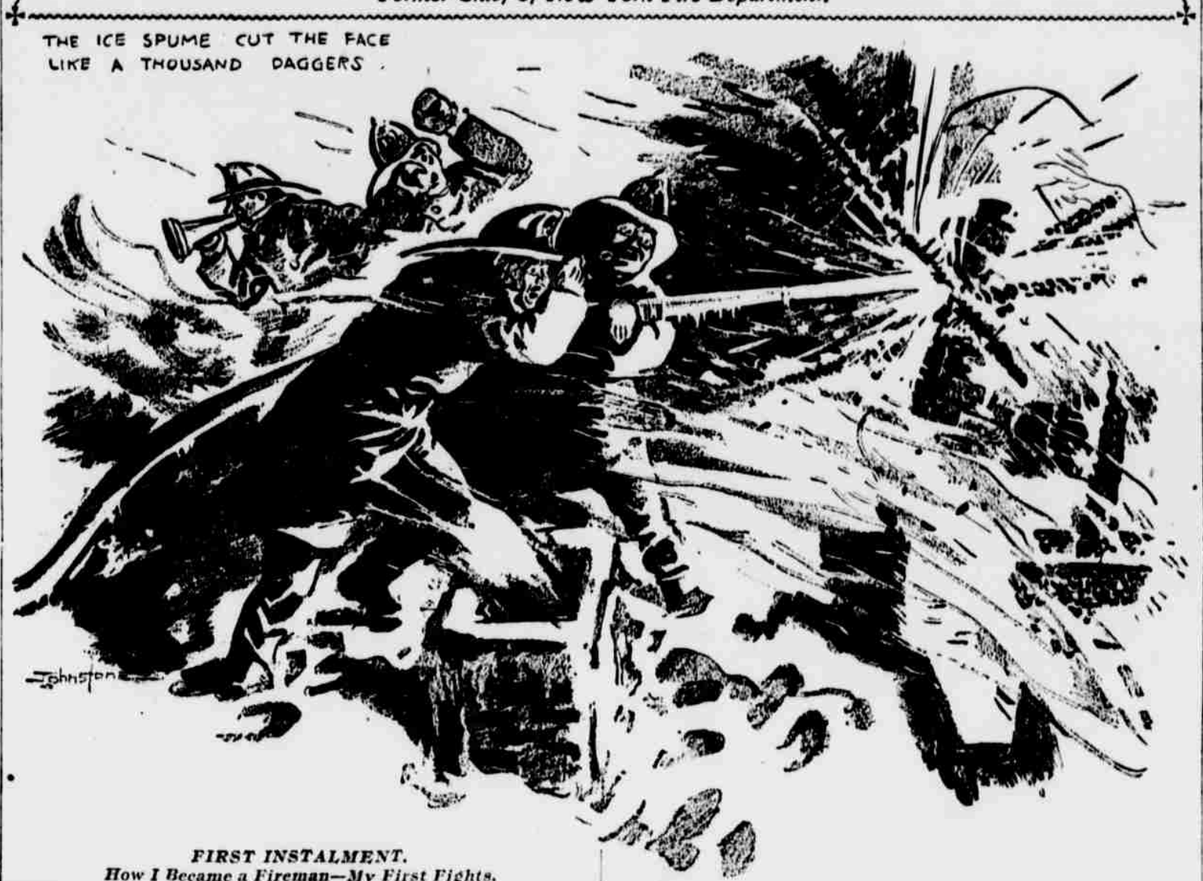
There was an unreality about it all, a touch of theatrical tawdriness, of mummery and tinsel gold and canvas distances, an acuteness of that feeling which one always has in the climaxes of actual life that they can not be quite real because the setting is not strange enough.

(To Be Continued.)

The Biggest Fires I've Fought

By Edward F. Croker

Former Chief of New York Fire Department.



FOR nearly three decades the central figure at every big New York fire was Edward F. Croker.

Through sheer merit and pluck he won and held the title of "Chief."

Every fireman breathed easier when the Chief arrived at a fire. Croker's eye and judgment were unerring. He directed his men as might a general in battle. He knew where the point of crisis lay and how to attack it.

No other living man is so well qualified to tell the story of New York's biggest fires.

For the first time the former chief, in this series, reviews the great fires he has fought and tells of his men's bravery. The stories are of keenest interest, not only to every New Yorker, but to all who appreciate a stirring tale of heroism and peril.

FIRST INSTALMENT.

How I Became a Fireman—My First Fights.

WHEN I am asked to tell about the biggest fires I fought during my twenty-seven years in the Fire Department of this city I am obliged to stop and think.

The biggest fires were not always those filled with the most incidents. They were not always the most interesting. They were not of necessity the hardest to get at or the most dangerous. Many firemen have lost their lives where the damage done the property by the actual fire was small.

An explosion, a back-draught, an overpowering smoke or, worst of all, the fumes from chemicals—all these have caused loss of life to firemen. These fires have not been always big fires.

So I shall tell The Evening World's readers of those fires which most impressed me as a fireman.


E. F. CROKER

I went into the business of fighting fires much against an early desire which was very strong. As a young man of twenty years my one absorbing desire was to handle the throttle on a locomotive. I was then working for the New York Central Railroad. And to sit in the cab of a big camel-back, its master, and feel the big iron monster respond to my touch—that was the goal of my ambition.

Richard Croker, my uncle, was then Fire Commissioner, and the suggestion to become a fireman came from him. He said to me one day:

"Eddie, why don't you go into the Police or Fire Departments? You think it over and let me know."

I told Richard Croker that I was willing to try fire fighting for awhile and I was given an appointment by him. I was put on probation for ten days without pay and then permanently assigned to Engine Company No. 50, on East One Hundred and Sixty-sixth street, between Third and Washington avenues.

The foreman there was Capt. John Ward, an old fireman who knew the business. He was a strict disciplinarian and I learned from him within a few days that the first duty of a fireman was to obey orders and not ask questions.

Future Chief's First Fire.

I WAS on watch that night when the gong sounded. I counted it and knew the box location in an instant. It was only around the corner on Washington avenue. In a moment came the welcome excitement which I had looked for so long. It was a bustle and a hustle, and I swung aboard the hose jumper and felt then the real tingle of nerves which made me feel equal to any emergency.

It was such a small fire—a bedroom fire in a frame house on Washington avenue, near One Hundred and Sixty-seventh street. The hose was strung in and I followed the pipemen upstairs. I got my first smell of smoke, and it acted almost like an intoxicant. I was not much help. The fire was put out in a few minutes. But I knew that I had not misused my calling. I knew that I was born for nothing else.

The second fire was too long coming, and I determined to get into a busier company. I heard that No. 33 Engine, in Great Jones street, was the hottest in the city, and I asked for a transfer to that house. I got it.

Capt. Birmingham was in command there, and I soon found the difference between 33 and 50. This was a double company with two sections. The first section got all the first alarms and I was much disappointed to find myself assigned to the second. Foreman Nash, now of 71, was then engineer in 33 and I learned much from him about the apparatus.

Bonner was Deputy Chief and had quarters in 33's house. I knew that he could put me in the other section. So, one day an opportune time came and I told him that I had entered the Fire Department to learn the fire fighting business and that unless I was put on the busy side of the house I should get out.

"Want more work, eh?" said he. "Well I guess we can arrange that."

Two days later I was assigned to the first section.

A Night of Wild Battle.

THE winter of '84 was very hard. There were many big fires and No. 33 Engine was always doing its share. We had just 863 men in the whole department, and one man on sick leave meant the stopping of all nights off.

The night was bitter and the call came in from the box at Houston and Mott streets. It was along toward 6 P. M. When we turned into Bleecker from Broadway I saw the whole street lighted from the flames, which were showing from a big lithographic plant at the corner of Mott. I was then assistant foreman.

We were the first company due, and we coupled on the nearest hydrant and found it frozen fast. We ran to the next and found it clear. The fire had been burning some time. The fire had eaten it's way up into the centre of the building and the interior was a furnace. The floors of the building were heavily loaded with presses, and we had scarcely got a stream on the front end when a portion of the third floor gave way with a roar and the fire poured from the windows with redoubled force.

Our pipemen had got their line up a side stairway, but were not able to hold the position after the collapse, and they got a new position on the rear end. A second and a third were sent in, and with the arrival of other apparatus we began to make some impression on the rear end.

The water tower in those days consisted of lengths of iron pipe, which were raised into position by a windlass and held in position by stays.

As usual the tower was shifted, and when it finally got into action one of the stays slipped and over she toppled, drenching half a company of men. The cold was so extreme that the men became numbed, and covered as they were with pounds of ice, they staggered around like drunkards.

The water we poured on seemed to have no effect. The streams falling into the mass of fire which filled the building's interior were turned to steam. The steam was carried away and fell in particles of ice.

There was a furious wind blowing, and this ice spume cut the face like a thousand tiny daggers.

Fight Between Rival Companies.

THERE were no reliefs then. One fought the fire until one dropped from exhaustion.

The "Buffs" in those days were few and very hard up. I recall that a dozen times I seemed on the point of collapse, but something kept me up. Once I remember I held the pipe against the heat until my clothes caught fire. It was a terrific heat caused by the burning oils and inks used by the lithographers, and the smoke that spread over the burning building was like a heavy blanket. Half a dozen men were knocked out.

They were taken aside and brought around by rubbing snow in their faces. We had few enough men and could not afford to send one back to quarters. Those men were real firemen. They were full of the old volunteer spirit and would fight each other for positions of danger.

They had little ways of kinking the hose of a rival company and slugging each other on the stairways with lanterns or wrenches. This was done playfully, but it sometimes had the effect of disabling the crew so that the other pipemen could get a coveted position. We had some huskies in No. 33.

At 3 P. M. the next day we had the fire out. But No. 33's men were sent into the water-filled cellar to "wash down." The walls did not fall and there was some fire under the ground flooring. We took in pipe with the water up to our waists, and while at work walked into a boiler pit. The water went over our heads. I scrambled out, soaked to the skin, and worked twenty minutes longer. When we came out and the cold air struck us our clothes froze stiff. We got back to quarters just before 4 o'clock and were thawing out when Station No. 230 came in at Houston and West Broadway.

Many of us were still in our wet clothes, but we turned out again to a fire on the southwest corner of Bleecker street and West Broadway. It was a carriage factory and showroom. This was a five-story building and 33 was the first on the scene. We carried our pipe into the building through the front entrance and worked to the roof. It was still very cold and we were on the job all that night. This was almost forty-eight hours without sleep and we were all in bad shape. I remember that the roof caved in with us and the whole company went down one floor. It was a wild scramble for life, but none of us got more than a few cuts and bruises.

We confined the fire to that building and got back to quarters and to bed. And beyond our beds we had no comforts at 33. We had a little eight by ten sitting room in the rear of the apparatus floor behind the horses and yet every man was contented. Nothing ever felt so good to me as the feel of that bed when I turned in.

Reflections of a BACHELOR GIRL

By Helen Rowland


HELEN ROWLAND.

TRUE hearts are more than coronets—and almost as rare nowadays.

Consistency is about the only jewel that some men think their wives need to possess.

Nothing makes a bachelor so disgusted as to meet a married man who doesn't seem to realize that he is unhappy.

Ah, well, in establishing a "Helen Club" the Northwestern University is only repeating history! The world has always had a "club" for "Helens" ever since Helen of Troy.

A man's idea of a perfectly innocent girl is one who knows enough to pretend not to know what she oughtn't to know.

A husband "reformed" against his will is the same old gay deceiver still.

It takes a typical New Yorker to economize on water as though it were money, and spend his money as though it were water.

Hell is paved with matrimonial dissensions.

Most men spend the last half of their lives trying to live down the reputations and cure the dyspepsia acquired during the first half.

Just a Glimpse Into The New York Shops

FOR motoring or travelling there are mohair coats in plain or striped gray as well as natural linen at $7.50.

The silk mohair are $8.50 and a heavy linen coat that is extremely smart with its double pockets, wide cuffs and large pearl buttons can be had in green, purple, raspberry, or the natural shades at $25.

The velvet "ears" that are now so popular as hat trimmings can be purchased in all prevailing colors ready to sew on the hat. Fastened to a fancy cabochon of ruffia or lace, they are $1, and finished off with a cross bow of the velvet they are $1.95.

The new double-breasted outing waist with box pleats on each side of the front strongly resembles the well-known Norfolk jacket in style. It has a black tie and leather belt attached and can be had in white and tan, with the sailor collar and cuffs of the same or contrasting material.

In linen these waists are $6.90 and in pongee $8.75. Matching skirts with a broad pleat at the front and back can be had.

The reversible coats that were introduced a year ago are now to be had in smart styles as low as $12.90. A beautiful line is being displayed at $22.50. These coats are usually of black satin with the reverse side of some pretty evening shades.

Then again the one side is of natural pongee, with the opposite side in stripes. Each side is a finished coat in itself and the contrary side forms the trimming of the deep collar, broad revers, the cuffs and the buttons.

White pique inside coat folds are $1 cents. Some in black and white lines striped silk have a piping in a bright color and sell at 50 cents.

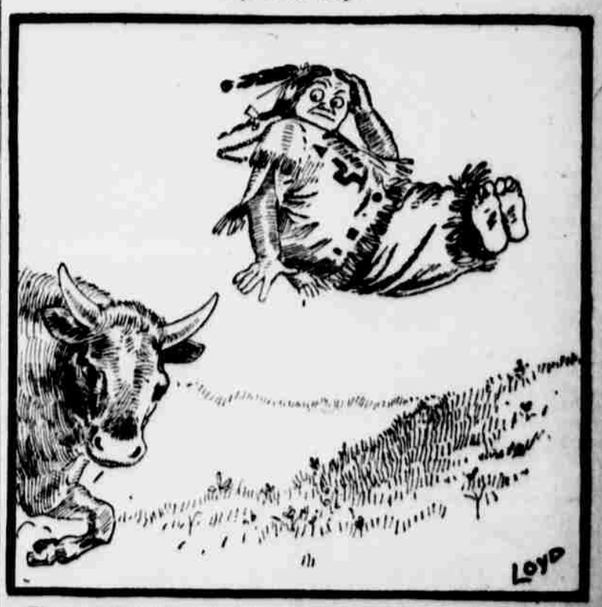
The girl graduate can get as exquisite wreath of tiny satin ribbon roses and foliage at $2.25. A single small rose is 65 cents and the deft girl can readily fix up a neat wreath with these. The clusters of roses that are now a fashionable coiffure accessory are $3.50.

The June bride will find creations of tulle, lace or chiffon combined with tiny orange blossoms to adorn her slippers at $3.80.

The handkerchiefs with narrow, hemstitched borders and tiny initials, in colors, are very dainty. They are sold in boxes of six handkerchiefs at $1.

Summer Resort Puzzles.

By Sam Loyd.



What two New York mountain resorts are represented in the picture? Answer to yesterday's puzzle: Cornwall and Lyons.